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Emerging Artists Awarded More Than Half a Million Dollars at 2026 Mid-South Scholastic Art Awards

Winning works now on view at the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art



Long Do, *Another Day*, Senior Division Best-In-Show, painting, grade 12, White Station High School, educator James Dycus

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (February 9, 2026) – Young artists from Memphis and the greater Mid-South were awarded over half a million dollars through the 2026 Mid-South Scholastic Art Awards, hosted by the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art. The awards included \$656,600 in scholarships and \$8,200 in cash prizes, supporting Memphis’s next generation of artists and creatives through continued education opportunities with national and regional organizations.

The winning works are now on view as a part of the *2026 Mid-South Scholastic Art Awards Exhibition*, presented by Brooks Museum League, Pinnacle Financial Partners, and the Art Now Collective, through February 22, and feature over 200 works by students in grades 7–12 from West Tennessee, East Arkansas, and North Mississippi. Widely regarded as the region’s highest level of student artistic recognition, the exhibition represents a milestone achievement for young artists, showcasing their work at a professional museum standard.

“Each year, this exhibition is a powerful reminder that Memphis is overflowing with extraordinary creative talent,” said Zoe Kahr, Executive Director of the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art/Memphis Art Museum. “Watching them grow, take risks, and find their voices never gets old. The originality and ambition on display here is remarkable, and we hope you’ll come see it.”

This year’s juried competition received 3,737 submissions from 514 students, spanning a wide range of artistic disciplines, including drawing, painting, photography, film, fashion, ceramics, sculpture, printmaking, mixed media, and digital art. From this competitive pool, 1,133 awards were presented.

Among this year’s standout honorees was Long Do, a senior at White Station High School, whose portfolio *Through Night and Day* documents his family’s restaurant through a series of detailed acrylic paintings. Do earned eight Gold Keys, the Marcia Bicks Portfolio Award, and a Pinnacle Bank-sponsored scholarship, and received both Senior Division Best-in-Show and the Senior Division Painting Award for his work *Another Day*. Also recognized was Maya Pentecost, a senior at Hutchison School, whose colored pencil portfolio *From My Point of View* explores light, color, and emotional perception in portraiture. Pentecost received four Gold Keys, an American Visions Award for *The Duality of Mom*, and Senior Division Second Place for *Orange You Glad You Looked Up?*

Top honors included Best-in-Show, First, Second, and Third Place awards, along with discipline-specific recognitions in Photography, Film, Fashion, Sculpture, and Digital Art. Gold Key recipients and American Visions nominees both advance to the national Scholastic Art Awards competition in New York City, where their work is evaluated alongside outstanding student artists from across the country. At the national level, American Visions nominees are considered for the prestigious American Visions Medal, one of the program’s highest honors.

This year’s exhibition was juried by a multi-generational panel of professional artists and educators from across the tri-state region, representing a wide range of disciplines and career stages, who evaluated submissions for originality, technical skill, and personal vision. Several jurors have works in the museum’s permanent collection, while others previously participated in the Scholastic Awards program themselves, bringing firsthand perspective to the selection process. The panel also included leaders of local arts organizations and instructors involved in the museum’s community education programs.

Through its long-standing partnership with the National Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art continues to serve as a key regional platform for youth creativity, education, and access, positioning student artists as active contributors to the cultural life of the Mid-South.

“The Scholastic Awards are about more than recognition. We are opening doors of opportunity,” said Judy Lang, President of the Brooks Museum League. “Through scholarships, national exposure, and professional mentorship, students can turn early talent into very real educational and career pursuits. We truly believe in the creative potential of our region.”

As the museum prepares to open its new downtown home as Memphis Art Museum in December 2026, education remains a cornerstone of its mission. Designed by Herzog & de Meuron, the world-renowned architecture firm, the new museum will significantly expand the museum’s capacity to serve students, educators, and families through dedicated learning spaces, public programs, and community partnerships.

The Mid-South Scholastic Art Awards reflect the museum's long-term commitment to arts education and youth opportunity—an investment that will continue and grow in the next chapter as Memphis Art Museum. From early learning through early career, the museum is committed to providing meaningful pathways for young people to engage with art, develop creative and critical thinking skills, and access national platforms for recognition and advancement.

As a new world-class cultural destination on the Mississippi River, Memphis Art Museum will build on more than a century of educational leadership, ensuring that young artists remain central to the museum's role as a civic, cultural, and educational anchor for Memphis and the broader region.

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About Memphis Art Museum

Opening in December 2026 along the Mississippi River, Memphis Art Museum is the reimaged home of the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art. As a 123,500-square-foot cultural campus, it offers expanded galleries, abundant public spaces, and new studios for learning and creativity. Designed as an open invitation to the city, the museum serves as a home for creativity and community, where Memphians and visitors gather, connect, and experience the power of art. With world-class architecture, a rooftop sculpture garden, and year-round cultural programming.

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